

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

Book Title: *Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati: Journey to the Summit*

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The cover of our *Encountering the Saints* book on Pier Giorgio Frassati really stands out. My first reaction was, “This guy looks *soooo* cool! I want to be his friend!” I’m sure this was the cover artist’s intention. So often, saints and blessed look, well...saintly! (No offense, Saint Francis of Assisi.) What they’ve done seems like so far of a reach for us. But Pier Giorgio looks like a cool guy!

The coolest people in school when I was growing up, were not always the nicest people. In fact, the cool kids often made jokes at the expense of others and purposefully excluded people from their games or conversations. Why do some people think they need to put others down to bring themselves up? Does making others feel bad really make them feel good? Surely not! We are all here on this earth together, and life would be so much better for all of us if we’d understand that cool and kind are not mutually exclusive.

Pier Giorgio Frassati can show kids that cool and kind *can* go together! Pier was the life of every party. He was an adventurous young man who spent his leisure time playing soccer, hiking, and skiing. But in addition to those “cool” qualities, he showed overwhelming kindness to the poor and sick.

As we go through our day, let us not forget to have fun with our friends AND to be kind to potential friends (and *everyone* is a potential friend). The children in our lives will see our examples and follow suit. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, pray for us!

Below you will find reflection questions to go with our Encounter the Saints book, along with history and service project connections.

Reflection Questions

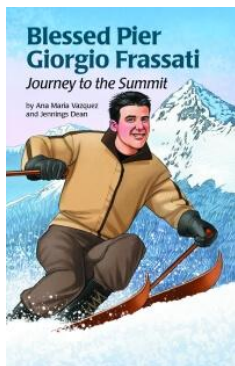
1. Pier Giorgio had a hard time learning Latin, but his sister excelled in school. Is there something that your siblings can do better than you? How does that make you feel?
2. Pier Giorgio gets mixed messages from his family about fighting. What are those messages? In your opinion, is fighting always good or bad?
3. Pier Giorgio was very open about his faith. He never hesitated to bring his friends to church or to pray with them. Have you ever thought about sharing your faith with someone and then felt nervous about it? Why do you think that you felt nervous? What little steps can you take that will make sharing your faith easier?
4. Pier Giorgio and his father often had differing opinions on certain issues. What did they agree on? What did they disagree on? Do you disagree with your parents about anything?

History Connection

Research World War I, the events that led to the war, Italy's involvement, and Fascism. Discuss how growing up in this environment probably influenced Pier Giorgio's life.

Service Project

As a class, brainstorm some small actions that could be done to help the poor in your community. Each student could choose one small idea and execute it on his or her own (with a parent's help). The charitable actions of the class could be measured using a miniature Pier Giorgio cut-out. When a student has accomplished a service action item, they can move Pier Giorgio up a notch. If the idea is a hit, Pier Giorgio can climb all over the classroom.



Pier Giorgio Frassati was born on April 6, 1901, in Turin, Italy. His father, Alfredo, was the founder and director of an Italian newspaper and a politician. His mother, Adelaide, was a painter. Mr. and Mrs. Frassati were not exactly ideal parents. Alfredo antagonized his children, and Adelaide was high-strung and critical. They attended Mass because it was an obligation.

From his early childhood, Pier Giorgio was sensitive to the needs of others. At the age of fourteen, he began attending Mass and receiving Communion almost every day. Later Pier Giorgio joined the Dominican Third Order. Pier Giorgio's ministry was to the poor. Pier

Giorgio's friends knew him as a lively prankster who enjoyed mountain climbing and

skiing. He was also a social justice activist, taking part in religious demonstrations against fascism.

In 1925, he contracted polio from one of his patients. By June, he was severely ill, but kept his sufferings secret because his grandmother was dying in the Frassati home at the time. He claimed to have the flu and his family gave him little thought. By the time his grandmother died, no one knew that Pier Giorgio was close to death. His mother, who stayed home with him instead of attending the funeral, criticized him for coming down with the flu at such an inconvenient time. But soon she realized that her son was very ill – and not with the flu. Pier Giorgio would die three days later.

His last hours were spent in quiet prayer and in giving last minute instructions for helping the poor, who were always on his mind. Then, early in the morning of July 4, 1925, he died quietly after receiving the Sacrament of Anointing. He was twenty-four.

Pier Giorgio was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1990. The life of Pier Giorgio will impress kids more than many other saints because they will be able to relate to this athletic, adventurous youth and young adult. They will learn one of his principles of life: "Life must be lived well, following true and sound principles. It's never enough to simply get along."

Ages 8 – 12

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